



**NOAA** NATIONAL OCEANIC AND  
ATMOSPHERIC ADMINISTRATION  
UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

## **Gulf of Mexico Fishery Bulletin**

*Bringing Fishing News to You*

**FB17-008**

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### **Final Rule Modifies Gear Requirements and Fishing Year for Yellowtail Snapper in the Gulf of Mexico**

#### **KEY MESSAGE:**

NOAA Fisheries announces a final rule for yellowtail snapper in the Gulf of Mexico (Gulf). This rule modifies the gear requirement for the commercial harvest and adjusts the fishing year for both commercial and recreational fishermen.

#### **WHEN RULE WILL TAKE EFFECT:**

- The final rule will be effective on March 13, 2017.

#### **WHAT THIS MEANS:**

- Removal of a requirement to use circle hooks when fishing with natural bait for the commercial harvest of yellowtail snapper south of Cape Sable, Florida, in the Gulf. Specifically, the requirement would apply in the area south of a line extending due west from **25°09' North latitude** off the west coast of Monroe County, Florida, to the Gulf and South Atlantic inter-council boundary.
- Adjustment of the commercial and recreational fishing year for yellowtail snapper in the Gulf from January 1 through December 31, to August 1 through July 31 to coincide with the fishing year for this species in the South Atlantic.

**FORMAL FEDERAL REGISTER NAME/NUMBER:** FR#2017-02786, published February 10, 2017.

This bulletin serves as a Small Entity Compliance Guide, complying with section 212 of the Small Business Regulatory Enforcement Fairness Act of 1996.

## **FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS (FAQs)**

### **Why should J-hooks be allowed for commercial harvest of yellowtail snapper?**

- Yellowtail snapper are primarily caught around the southern half of Florida, with the majority of landings coming from the Florida Keys.
- Circle hooks are required when fishing with natural bait for reef fish, including yellowtail snapper, in federal waters of the Gulf. The use of circle hooks is intended to reduce discard mortality caused from fish being gut-hooked by J-hooks.
- For the commercial harvest of yellowtail snapper, the fishermen attract the fish to the surface using chum and then use small hooks with natural bait and cane poles or spinning reels to catch yellowtail snapper. The use of J-hooks for this method allows for decreased handling times due to quicker dehooking methods for retained fish.

### **Why is the fishing season being changed for both the recreational and commercial harvest of yellowtail snapper?**

- Yellowtail snapper are primarily caught around the southern half of Florida, with the majority of landings coming from the Florida Keys.
- The proposed rule would modify the yellowtail snapper fishing year in the Gulf, making it consistent with the new fishing year in the South Atlantic. Having the same fishing year for both the Gulf and South Atlantic would benefit the fishermen that harvest yellowtail snapper in both regions.

### **Where can I find more information on this action?**

- Contact NOAA Fisheries, Southeast Regional Office  
**By Mail:** Cynthia Meyer  
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Sustainable Fisheries Division  
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St. Petersburg, Florida 33701-5505  
**By FAX:** (727) 824-5308  
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- Yellowtail Framework may be found online at the NOAA Fisheries Southeast Regional Office Web site  
at: [http://sero.nmfs.noaa.gov/sustainable\\_fisheries/gulf\\_fisheries/reef\\_fish/2016/yellowtail\\_snapper\\_framework/index.html](http://sero.nmfs.noaa.gov/sustainable_fisheries/gulf_fisheries/reef_fish/2016/yellowtail_snapper_framework/index.html)

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